

were Protestant powers, but to large economic movements, in particular the Discoveries and the results which flowed from them.

Of course material and psychological changes went together, and of

•" course the second reacted on the first. But it seems a little artificial to talk as though capitalist enterprise could not appear till religious changes had produced a capitalist spirit. It would be equally true, and equally one-sided, to say that the religious changes were purely the result of economic movements.

(ii) Weber ignores, or at least touches too lightly on, intellectual movements, which were favourable to the growth of business enterprise and to an individualist attitude towards economic relations,

' but which had little to do with religion. The political thought of the Renaissance was one; as Brentano points out, Machiavelli

was at least as powerful a solvent of traditional ethical restraints' as Calvin. The speculations of business men and economists on money, prices, and the foreign exchanges were a second.

Both contributed to the temper of single-minded concentration on pecuniary gain, which Weber understands by the capitalist spirit.

(iii) He appears greatly to over-simplify Calvinism itself. In the first place, he apparently ascribes to the "English Puritans of the seventeenth century the conception of social ethics held by Calvin and his immediate followers. In the second place, he speaks as though all English Puritans in the seventeenth century held much the same view of social duties and expediency. Both suggestions are misleading. On the one hand, the Calvinists of the sixteenth century (including English Puritans) were believers in a rigorous discipline, and the individualism ascribed not unjustly to the Puritan movement in its later phases would have horrified them. The really significant question is that of the causes of the change from the one standpoint to the other, a question which Weber appears to ignore.

On the other hand, there were within seventeenth-century Puritanism a variety of elements, which held widely different views as to social policy. As Cromwell discovered, there was no formula which would gather Puritan aristocrats and Levellers, landowners and Diggers, merchants and artisans, buff-coat and his general, into the fold of a single social theory. The issue between divergent doctrines was fought out within the Puritan movement itself. Some won; others lost.

Both "the capitalist spirit" and "Protestant ethics," therefore, were a good deal more complex than Weber seems to imply. What is true and valuable in his essay is his insistence that the commercial classes in seventeenth-century England were the standard-bearers of a particular conception of social expediency, which was markedly different from that of the more conservative elements in society—the